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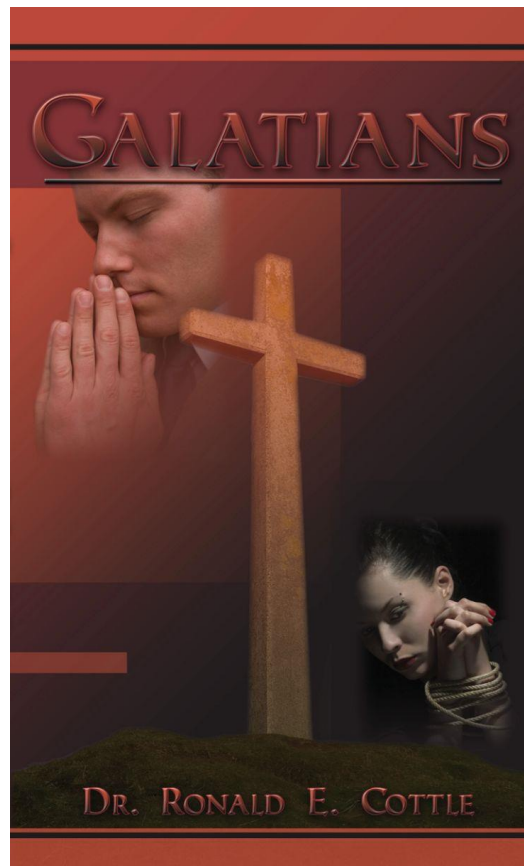
GALATIANS

COURSE: GALATIANS, THE BOOK OF (NT104)

DR. RONALD E. COTTLE

GALATIANS

*Guideposts for
Victorious Christian Living*



*A Bible study for laymen, ministers and teachers based
on principles of vital Christian life and faith found in
Paul's letter to the Galatians.*



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ronald E. Cottle was born in Columbus, Georgia, and trained for the ministry following his teenage years. He earned the B.A., M.Div. and Ph.D. in Religion. He then returned to the University of Southern California to study education, earning the MS.Ed. and the Ed.D. His preaching and teaching have been referred to as “scholarship on fire.” He writes with fervor and intensity, even as he teaches. Dr. Cottle founded and now serves as President Emeritus of Beacon University and Beacon Institute of Ministry.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my father, the late Guy Eastwood Cottle, one of the three finest men ever to touch my life. He was gentle, caring and loving. I often sought and always found compassion in him.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The letters of Paul to the earliest Christians are among the richest literature in existence. This special Book of Galatians, probably his first letter, is unique among them. In it Paul reveals a strong, intense personality caught up in conflict for men's souls. The battle is for his Galatian converts recently won to the faith. The enemy is their regression from the Christian faith into legalism and empty ritualism. The Galatians were backsliding toward apostasy. This letter is part of Paul's successful attempt to keep them within the Christian faith. The conflict is apparent on every page of the book. I hope that the guideposts to victorious Christian living which I found here will also lift and encourage you.

August 31, 1987 Columbus, Georgia

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The thousands of students who have read this book and found insight and help in it have encouraged me to continue its life beyond the first edition. Hence, the present volume. Only editorial changes have been made, not substantive textual revisions. Perhaps in the next four years, I shall issue a more thorough revision taking into account literature since 1987.

June 1, 1997 Columbus Georgia

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INTRODUCTION

QUESTIONS ON THE BACKGROUND OF GALATIANS

Text: Galatians 1:1-5

Who are the Galatians? The central part of what is now known as Turkey was known as Galatia in Paul's day. The people of the area had originally been Celtic tribesmen who had made their way from Europe into Asia Minor in the third century B.C. In 25 B.C., Galatia was made a province of the Roman Empire with its capital at Ancyra (now Ankara), but its boundaries were extended southward to include not only the original kingdom of Galatia in the north but also other native peoples such as the Lycaonians, and various other cities with mixed population: Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and Antiochin- Pisidia.

So there were two "Galatias" in Paul's day: the ancient "kingdom of Galatia," which was the central part of modern Turkey around Ankara to the north, and the Roman "Province of Galatia" including the territory of the ancient kingdom plus the

southern territories of Lycaonia, and such cities as Iconium, Lystra, Derbe and Antioch-in-Pisidia. Now the big question about which scholars are still divided today is, to whom was this book written? Who were the Galatians of Paul's concern? Were they the barbarous Celts of North Galatia, the old geographical area of the kingdom? Or, were they the Roman citizens of Southern Galatia in the cities of Lystra, Derbe, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch? Or both?

The record of Paul's first missionary journey during which he and Barnabas founded these churches of Galatia is in Acts 13 and 14. Paul, Barnabas and John Mark left Antioch-in-Syria and sailed via Cyprus (Barnabas' home) to Perga in South Asia Minor. From there, they went north through the Taurus Mountains into the Province of Galatia and arrived at Antioch-in-Pisidia. John Mark left them at Perga and returned home to Jerusalem, but Paul and Barnabas went on to Iconium and Lystra and Derbe. They turned around at Derbe and retraced their steps through Lystra, Iconium and Perga. Then they sailed from Perga straight back to Antioch-in-Syria where they had started.

There are two other possible references in Acts to Paul's later travels in Galatian territory.

Now when they [Paul and Timothy—see verse 1] had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia (Acts 16:6)

And after he [Paul] had spent some time there, he departed and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening the disciples. (Acts 18:23)

The primary reason some scholars claim that Galatians was written to the Celtic tribesmen of North Galatia, the ancient Kingdom of Galatia, is the fact that they find a reference to the country or geographical territory (i.e. “kingdom”) of Galatia in the use of the word *choran*, country (18:23) or region (16:6). Now, it is true that Paul is careful to always use the names of the provinces correctly, seldom mixing references to territories and provinces in the Epistles. Luke, however, who wrote Acts, is not so careful and in these verses he simply refers to the Roman Province of Galatia by the term country (*choran*) with little or no concern.

Therefore, if these two references are not to the northern kingdom of Galatia, but to the general province, then there is no reference anywhere in the New Testament to Paul’s ever founding any churches among the Celts in the north. Thus, Galatians was written to the Roman citizens of the southern half of the province—Antioch, Perga, Iconium, Derbe and Lystra. This is the so-called “South Galatian theory.”

A second reason for adopting this theory is that it fits better with the apparent familiarity with the Jewish religion that the readers had. Paul speaks of the details of the Jewish religion of that day with such intimacy that the Galatians had to have first-

hand knowledge of the faith. Jewish colonies have been found to have existed in southern Galatia of that day, but not in northern Celtic Galatia.

Now this brings us to the next question in the background of Galatians. **What was the occasion and purpose for the writing of Galatians?** Paul was under attack by certain Jewish-Christian teachers who came into Galatia after he left there and began to discredit (1) **his apostleship** and (2) **his message**. They taught that in order to be valid, the Gospel of Christ had to be combined with Jewish observances of the law. Paul wrote Galatians to defend himself and his gospel from these destructive attacks!

The first attack was on Paul's apostleship. The "Judaizers" said that Paul had no "apostolic credentials," and technically they were right. Peter spelled out the desired credentials of the successor of Judas in Acts 1:21-22 where he said,

[Apostles are] ...men which [a] have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day he was taken up from us, [b] must...be ordained [by Jesus' authority—the only authority] to be a witness with us of His resurrection.

Paul was not there with Jesus during His earthly ministry, so he failed the first test. Not only that, he had been the very arch-persecutor of the church, and had no official endorsement from the church at Jerusalem, the church pastored at that time by James, the brother of Jesus. So he also failed the second test. But Paul brushes all this aside

and insists that his apostleship is of a divine source and not dependent upon such criteria. We will come to this later in Chapter 1.

The second attack of the Judaizers was upon Paul's gospel. Again Paul vehemently insists that his gospel is from God and without the influence of man.

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

(Galatians 1:11-12)

And that is his answer, take it or leave it! The gospel is its own "credential." It is above mere human endorsement! The word certify is *gnorizo* and means "I declare" or "I give to understand." Paul would not stoop to dignify the Judaizers' accusations by discussing them. He let the fruit of his ministry speak for itself.

PART ONE PERSONAL ARGUMENT

“Paul versus Judaizers”

Galatians 1:1-2:21

CHAPTER ONE: GOSPEL OF GRACE

TEXT: GALATIANS 1:1-5

In Paul's greeting (verses 1-5), he includes more than just a polite "hello." He gets in his first punch in this controversy here. It is couched in verse 1, "Paul, an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)." An apostle is one sent, commissioned and anointed. Paul claims that title. He is direct, deliberate and defiant about it. Everything hinges upon the Galatians' acceptance of Paul's apostolic authority. He will not hedge here, nor will he stand for opposition.

Some contemporary scholars have criticized Paul for his adamant stand here. They have even attempted to analyze his seeming jealousy for position and title, but they miss the issue! Paul demands his rightful position and title here, not because of personal jealousy or insecurity, but because he recognizes that the authority of his gospel and the Galatians' faith are set aside without it. Paul knew that the very